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Locating critical discourse studies within school textbook research: a systematic literature review of research articles

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ABSTRACT

Among critical approaches to school textbook research, critical discourse studies (CDS) has proven itself a valuable and productive analytical approach. This paper surveys a database of 60 recent peer-reviewed research articles that use CDS approaches to investigate school textbooks. All the reviewed articles were published between 2018 and February 2024 and were drawn from various scholarly databases. The review aims to trace the regional coverage of the studies, types of the analyzed textbooks, the main used CDS frameworks and the major issues that were investigated. Findings indicate that oppressive discourses are the primary focus of most studies, with gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and minority groups, being particularly prominent. While English as a Foreign language (EFL) textbooks are prevalent among investigated textbooks, the regional coverage is diverse, an evidence of the growing popularity of CDS in textbook research. The review suggests that future research should investigate under-explored textbook types, expand its focus beyond well-researched topics to include under-studied emerging global issues and incorporate under-used CDS approaches to better capture the complexities of textbook discourse.

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SUBJECTS

Education Policy; Curriculum Studies; Discourse Analysis

1. Introduction

In the current age of the digital revolution, textbooks increasingly compete or complement various other educational media forms. Digital technologies, for instance, provide students and teachers with a variety of resources such as interactive softwares, multimedia content and online courses, offering more personalized and attractive learning experience to younger generations. Despite this, studies indicate that textbooks still continue to hold a paramount significance as educational media in schools globally (Fuchs & Bock, 2018). They remain the primary tools through which formal education and instruction are expressed and enacted (Canale, 2022), and also stand out as one of the few media explicitly designed to shape the beliefs, understandings, and perspectives of upcoming generations (Macgilchrist, 2017). The knowledge produced in them have specific kind of authority and acceptance as truth (Thoma, 2017). According to Canale (2022), they are complex educational media not only because of their production process, design and materiality, but also because they play many overlapping roles in education.

Within this educational context, many scholars have been investigating textbooks from different fields of inquiry for the past several decades (Macgilchrist, 2017). Among these fields, discourse analysis (DA) in all its variations, emerged as an approach, uniquely suitable to the specifics of the medium of textbooks due to its strong focus on the hybrid nature of the texts when it overlaps different discourses (Fuchs & Henne, 2018). Since its emergence in educational research, discourse analysis has improved our collective understanding of learning and teaching processes (Rogers et al., 2005; Warriner & Anderson, 2017), and provided textbook researchers with methods and epistemologies ranging from linguistic or multimodal to post-structuralist or neo-materialist (Christophe et al., 2018).

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Within the various discursive approaches, critical discourse studies (CDS) emerges as a most useful and productive approach to textbook research. CDS focuses its attention on how semantic, argumentation and lexico-grammatical patterns shape knowledges and position learners as particular student-subjects. It draws on textbook discourse to question fundamental conceptual issues ranging from the politics of visibility to the role of individual human agency in contesting the apparent closure of (dominant) discourse or environmental degradation. (Macgilchrist, 2017). Given that textbooks are entrenched in broad and complex cultural, social, political and economic processes which must be considered for a critical contextualized and comprehensive analysis of their discourse (Canale, 2022), CDS is particularly effective in analyzing them.

The present study provides a systematic review of cutting-edge CDS literature on textbooks research. It carries out a meta-analysis of 60 articles published between 2018 and 2024 (February) focusing on four main variables: the regional coverage of studies, types of the analyzed textbooks, the main used CDS approaches and frameworks and the major issues that were investigated. By systematically classifying and summarizing studies in the existing literature that have incorporated CDS in textbook research over the last six years, this study aims to reveal the research topics that have been prominent and point out gaps for future research. 'School textbooks', in the context of this study, refer to textbooks used in various levels and settings of public and private formal education. These include primary, secondary, and university-level textbooks, as well as specialized training texts for vocational fields such as nursing or medicine. It also applies to textbooks used across different age groups, from young children in primary school to adults in higher education. One study related to our research is Smith and Sheyholislami (2022) which also conducts a review of literature that features CDS researches of textbooks. Our study, however, is more focused on up-to-date studies and provides analysis of regional data as well as a concise overview of all studies.

2. Conceptual background

2.1. Critical discourse studies

The field of discourse studies appeared in the 1960s when several forms of discourse analysis were developed and applied within the social sciences. Since then, it has become a diverse field under the influence of various thinkers, disciplines and intellectual traditions (Lester et al., 2016). While there is no single definition of discourse analysis because of the 'fuzzy conceptual boundaries' of the term 'discourse' (Mautner, 2022), some define it as the study of language in use or above the sentence level, while others use the phrase 'discourse analysis' for how sentences in oral or written texts pattern together to create meaning and coherence (Gee, 2013). Mautner (2022) suggests that whatever approach of discourse analysis a researcher adopts, it will not be considered as focused on 'discourse' unless its research designs involve both 'larger units' and consideration of the 'social context' to some extent. Consequently, it is more helpful to think of discourse analysis as a blanket term used to describe an interdisciplinary set of qualitative approaches used to study language in social life (Lester et al., 2016).

Starting from the late 1980s, critical discourse studies (CDS), a new branch of discourse analysis has become influential and most visible in social analysis (Nartey, 2022). A branch that mainly studies 'the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context'. (Dijk, 2001, p. 352). Emerging from critical linguistics (Fairclough, 2013) and influenced by different social theories such as Louis Althusser's theories of ideology, the philosophy of Antonio Gramsci, Mikhail Bakhtin's genre theory, Frankfurt School's writings, and Michel Foucault's theory of discourse (Titscher, 2007), CDS focuses on the empirical study of the relationship between discourse and social and cultural developments (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002) with the goal of deconstructing and making explicit how complex social problems are linguistically represented and opening up possibilities of emancipation by challenging them. (Angermüller et al., 2014). CDS does not only describe and interpret discourse in context but also offers explanations of how and why discourses work in contrast with the non-critical descriptive approaches which study verbal interactions and texts

as if they are unconnected to social structure (Fairclough, 2009). Critical discourse analysts take 'explicit position' (Dijk, 2001, p. 352) and adopt 'a social justice approach' (Nartey, 2022, p. 459).

Critical discourse studies consists of several approaches, among which there are both similarities and differences. Some of these approaches are Foucault's and Pecheux's French discourse analysis, Hodge's and Kress' social semiotics, Wodak's discourse historical method, van Dijk's socio-cognitive studies and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (Rogers, 2011). Fairclough distinguishes between two major types among these approaches; those that include a detailed analysis of texts (textually oriented DA) and those which do not (Fairclough, 2009). Gee (2004) distinguishes between the capitalized CDA 'Critical Discourse Analysis' and 'critical discourse analysis'. He contends that CDA refers to the approach informed by Fairclough, Wodak, van Dijk, van Leeuwen, Hodge, Kress, and followers, while 'critical discourse analysis' encompasses a broader range of approaches practiced by several scholars who do not necessarily label their work specifically as CDA, including his own framework.

What CDS is not, however, is a method of analysis. It is not a reproducible, systematic procedure for critical analysis. Being critical is 'a state of mind' (Dijk, 2013) and as long as the researcher formulates critical goals for his research, s/he can use any suitable method, hence the preference of the use of the term Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) as it is less confusing (Dijk, 2013). The term 'Discourse Studies' (DS) brings together 'discourse-theoretical and discourse-analytical strands' (Angermüller et al., 2014, p. 5). For this reason, we use the term critical discourse studies (CDS) in this article.

Since its appearance in the late 1980s, CDS has been abundantly applied to language use in different domains, including politics (Fairclough, 2001b), media (Kelsey, 2017), law (Rajah, 2017), music (van Leeuwen, 2012) etc., often revealing the non-neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions underlying language use (Nartey & Mwinlaaru, 2019). CDS has also proven popular in the fields of education (Lester et al., 2016, 2017; Rogers, 2017), including textbook analysis (Canale, 2022; Fuchs & Bock, 2018; Macgilchrist, 2017), as researchers have increasingly turned to it to answer questions about the relationships between language and society (Rogers et al., 2005).

2.2. Textbook studies

Textbook studies is a newly emerging field, born from the integration of various methods related to textbooks study and analysis (Fuchs & Bock, 2018). Its aim is to unify the research field while at the same time preserve its 'pluralistic approach' (Canale, 2022) given that researchers whose work focused on textbook analysis hitherto primarily identified with their disciplinary orientation (such as discourse analysis or sociology) rather than with textbook research itself (Fuchs & Bock, 2018).

Research on textbooks has attracted the attention of scholars as textbooks hold a distinctive position in influencing the values, knowledge, and subjective perspectives of their readers (Macgilchrist, 2017). Beyond being mere carriers of information, textbooks are products influenced by political, economic, and cultural forces. They are conceived, designed, and authored by individuals with vested interests, reflecting various activities, conflicts and compromises (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991). They serve an ideological purpose in the interests of certain privileged groups (Fairclough, 2001a).

Textbooks are researched from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. Macgilchrist (2017) mentions several approaches starting with content analysis which was initially the cornerstone of textbook studies. From there, research went through different pedagogical, ethnographical and practical orientations ending up with the critical perspectives, a variety of social and cultural theories which engage in theorizing, conceptualizing and examining textbooks as both material artifacts and practices (Macgilchrist, 2017). Among these, we find the sociology of education, cultural politics, curriculum studies, ethnographic approaches to discourse, critical applied linguistics and critical discourse studies (Canale, 2022). These critical approaches see textbooks as important sites for reproduction of power relations and struggle over what counts as school knowledge (Wangdu, 2020).

Seeking to raise critical awareness about the discursive dimensions of social problems involving dominance, disadvantage, and discrimination with the aim of contributing to broader emancipatory projects, CDA has extensively put textbooks under investigation (Rogers et al., 2005). It has indicated that textbooks actively communicate particular social realities, norms or values, often positioning them as the preferred or ideal standard within the educational context, without being questioned or challenged

(Macgilchrist, 2017). This makes them ideological artifacts which have the capacity to create interpretations that support and sustain existing power dynamics (Uzum et al., 2021). Accordingly, a substantial body of research have relied on CDS to examine different critical issues in school textbooks such gender construction (Benattabou, 2020; Dalimunthe et al., 2021; Guichot-Reina & De La Torre-Sierra, 2023; Parise, 2021; Setyono, 2018; Triyono et al., 2021), racism (Herath, 2021; Moore, 2020; Padilla & Vana, 2024) ethnicities (Said, 2023a, 2023b; Said et al., 2024) ideology (Hallett, 2021) and other topics.

3. Database of studies: sources and selection criteria

This survey is based on a database of 60 articles, published between 2018 and 2024 (February). The studies were retrieved from five main online databases (Taylor and Francis, Sage publications, Springer, Wiley, Science direct) that publish some of the most prestigious journals, in addition to Google Scholar. Table 1 presents the searched databases, Journals and number of articles from each journal. Using the search terms 'critical discourse' + 'study/analysis' + 'textbooks', the selected literature was first filtered to exclude articles published before 2018 to guarantee the most up-to-date literature on the topic. The database was then further filtered to make sure that all the studies use and mention CDS explicitly as their -or one of their- approach to textbook analysis. Thus, articles that use content analysis were

Table 1. Distribution of studies across Journals and Databases (total number of studies =60).

Database/publisher	Journal and number of articles
Taylor and Francis	Critical Discourse Studies (5)
	Cogent Arts & Humanities (2)
	Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education (2)
	Cogent Education (2)
	Gender and Education (2)
	Journal of Curriculum Studies (1)
	Race Ethnicity and Education (1)
	Journal of Language, Identity & Education (1)
	International Journal of Inclusive Education (1)
	Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development (1)
	Critical Public Health (1)
	Asia Pacific Journal of Education (1)
	Language Awareness (1)
	International Studies in Sociology of Education (1)
	Critical Studies on Terrorism (1)
	Journal of Multicultural Discourses (1)
	British Journal of Religious Education (1)
	Sex Education (1)
	History of Education (1)
	Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education (1)
	Intercultural Education (1)
	Critical Studies in Education (1)
	Pedagogy, Culture & Society (1)
Sage publications	Discourse & Society (2)
	SAGE Open (2)
	Journal of Health Psychology (1)
	Theory & Psychology (1)
	Social Studies of Science (1)
	Journal of Education for Sustainable Development (1)
	Studies in Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis (1)
Springer	Sexuality & Culture (4)
	Conceptual Shifts and Contextualized Practices in Education for Global Interaction (1)
	Science & Education (1)
	Curriculum Perspectives (1)
Wiley	Mathematics Education Research Journal (1)
	Reading Research Quarterly (1)
	World Englishes (1)
Science direct	International Journal of Applied Linguistics (1)
	Studies in Educational Evaluation (1)
	Linguistics and Education (1)
Google Scholar	Religions (1)
	Beta: Jurnal Tadris Matematika (1)
	The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa (1)
	EuroAmerican Journal of Applied Linguistics and Languages (1)
	International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research (1)
	International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences (1)
	Diakronika (1)

excluded since Discourse Studies does not consider meaning as a fixed or given entity that can be read off the textual surface and reconstructed through spontaneous acts of comprehension (Angermüller et al., 2014). One limitation of our study, however, is that studies published in languages other than English were not captured in the analysis and readers should interpret the findings in view of this limitation.

The analysis of our data centered on examining geographic distribution of the studies, issues and topics explored, the used frameworks and the types of textbooks scrutinized in CDS research. The analysis was facilitated using an Excel spreadsheet. Except for the publication year, it was difficult to classify several studies into single categories. Some of the studies use multiple CDS frameworks, others examine diverse textbooks while others examine issues that are not easily demarcated. Studies that use multiple frameworks or that analyze multiple textbooks were classified in their category as 'diverse'. For examined topics, we have classified some of them so that closely related topics are classified as one category.

4. Meta-analysis of studies

This section proceeds to present the findings of the meta-analysis. First, we discuss the regional distribution of the studies. Next, we examine the types of textbooks that were analyzed and the frameworks that were drawn upon. Finally, we give a brief overview of the issues and findings of the articles.

4.1. Temporal and geographic distribution of studies

Table 2 presents the number of publications from 2018 to February 2024. This period however is relatively short and does not allow us to trace any signifying pattern from the chronological development. The aim of the review is to include the most up-to-date studies following the inception of textbook studies, marked by the publication of Fuchs and Bock (2018), the definitive work on textbook research.

By regional distribution, our literature covers all regions of the world including North and South America, Asia, Europe, Africa and Oceania. Two studies, (Smith, 2023) and (Keles et al., 2023) were classified as unspecified while two others (Shinabe, 2018) and (Curiel & Durán, 2021) as diverse. USA tops the list of countries with 10 studies (Bertotti & Miner, 2019; Burden, 2021; Chacón-Díaz, 2022; Padilla & Vana, 2019, 2024; Parise, 2021; Pavlick, 2019; Shume, 2023; Uzum et al., 2021; Westbrook & Harvey, 2023). Indonesia comes in the second place with eight studies (Bustang, 2023; Dalimunthe et al., 2021; Kurniawan et al., 2023; Purwanta, 2018; Puspitasari et al., 2021; Setyono, 2018; Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Triyono et al., 2021). Other studies cover four from China (Ji & Reiss, 2022; Lee, 2023; Liu et al., 2024; Xu, 2021), four from Morocco (Benattabou, 2020; Said, 2023a, 2023b; Said et al., 2024), three from Pakistan (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Lashari et al., 2023; Nizamani & Shah, 2024) and KSA (Alzubi et al., 2023; Hamdan Alghamdi, 2018; Sulaimani & Elyas, 2018), two from South Korea (Choi & Kim, 2020; Kim & Lee, 2023;) and India (D'Souza et al., 2020; Košir & Lakshminarayanan, 2023). Other countries join the list with one article including Australia (Moore, 2020), Iran (Babaii & Sheikhi, 2018), Thailand (Iamsa-ard et al., 2024), Lithuania (Hallett, 2021), Greece (Kostas, 2021), Philippines (Curaming & Curaming, 2020), Britain (Ford, 2019), Japan (Taira, 2019), Syria (Kourgiotis, 2023), Taiwan (Ho, 2021), Canada (Stelzl et al., 2018), Sri Lanka (Herath, 2021), Russia (Blinkova & Vermeer, 2019) and Spain (Guichot-Reina & De La Torre-Sierra, 2023). As for studies which cover several countries, the literature includes (Curiel & Durán, 2021),

Table 2. frequency distribution of publications from 2018 to February 2024.

Year	Publications
2018	8
2019	10
2020	6
2021	11
2022	5
2023	18
2024 (January, February)	2
	N = 60

Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, (Senior & LaMarre, 2024) New Zealand and Australia, (Wangdu, 2020) Tibet and India, (Gu, 2022) Japan and China, (Kim & Lee, 2023) Korea and Japan, (Shinabe, 2018) Spain and Japan (Pillay & Maistry, 2018) which covers various southern African countries.

4.2. Types of textbooks studied

Even though the variety of textbooks analyzed in the literature review was broad, certain categories received most scrutiny from researchers as Table 3 illustrates. Ranking number one, EFL textbooks received most attention with twenty-two studies which represent more than 36% of the studies. Of these, different issues were the foci of the studies including gender issues (Benattabou, 2020; Curaming & Curaming, 2020; Setyono, 2018; Triyono et al., 2021), ethnicities (Herath, 2021; Said, 2023a; 2023b; Said et al., 2024), neoliberalism (Babaii & Sheikhi, 2018; Nizamani & Shah, 2024), identity (Alzubi et al., 2023), nationalism (Kim & Lee, 2023) etc. The second most researched type of books in our database is history textbooks (7) with issues that are investigated that include history (Kurniawan et al., 2023, Gu, 2022; Pavlick, 2019), race (Moore, 2020), politics (Xu, 2021), colonialism (Purwanta, 2018) and religion (Kourgiotis, 2023). Social sciences ranks four with four studies (Choi & Kim, 2020; Ford, 2019; Košir & Lakshminarayanan, 2023; Wangdu, 2020), followed by mathematics (3) (Bustang, 2023; Guichot-Reina & De La Torre-Sierra, 2023; Parise, 2021), languages (3) (Ho, 2021; Lashari et al., 2023; Uzum et al., 2021), sexuality education (Ji & Reiss, 2022; Stelzl et al., 2018) and Spanish as SL (2) (Padilla & Vana, 2019, 2024). Other types of textbooks recorded one instance of analysis including Arabic for non-Arab speakers (Dalimunthe et al., 2021), bilingual reading textbooks (Spanish–English) (Curiel & Durán, 2021), business studies (Pillay & Maistry, 2018), children anthology textbooks (Kostas, 2021), Chinese language (Lee, 2023), environmental studies (D’Souza et al., 2020), ESL (Burden, 2021), geography and civic education (Shinabe, 2018), gynecology (Bertotti & Miner, 2019), Japanese language (Kim & Lee, 2023), psychology (Senior & LaMarre, 2024), religious education (Blinkova & Vermeer, 2019), science and mathematics (Chacón-Díaz, 2022), social and behavioral sciences (Westbrook & Harvey, 2023), teacher education (Shume, 2023). One study, (Taira, 2019) analyzed diverse textbooks while (Iamsa-ard et al., 2024), did not specify the type of books used (Table 3).

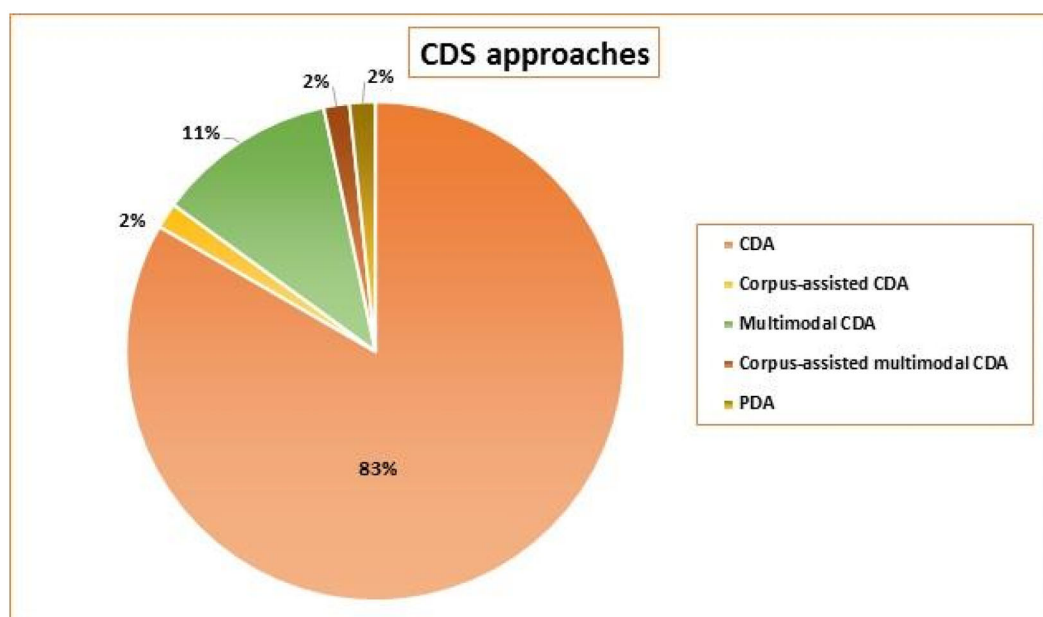
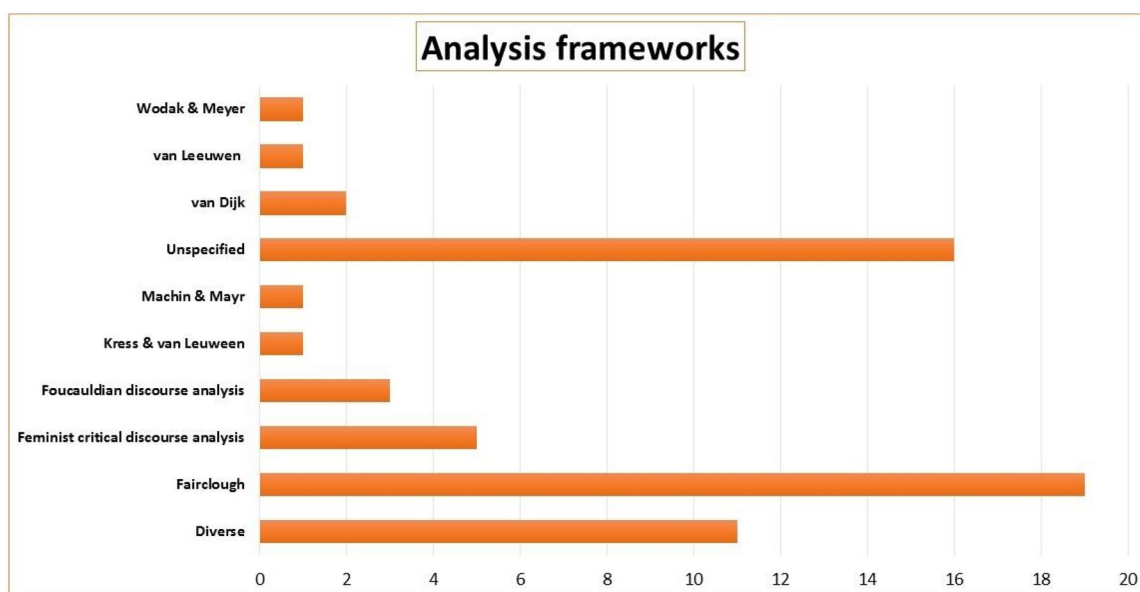


Figure 1. Frequency distribution CDS approaches.

Table 3. Frequency distribution of textbooks types.

Textbook type	Number of studies	Percentage of total studies
EFL (English as a Foreign Language)	22	36%
History	7	11%
Social Sciences	4	6%
Mathematics	3	5%
Languages	3	5%
Sexuality Education	2	3%
SSL (Spanish as a Second Language)	2	3%
Other Textbook Types (17)	1 (each)	1% (each)
Total	(N = 60)	100%

**Figure 2.** Frequency distribution of CDS frameworks.

4.3. CDS approaches and frameworks

As for CDS approaches, 83% of studies employed traditional linguistic CDA. 11% multimodal CDA, 2% positive discourse analysis (PDA), 2% Corpus-assisted CDA, 2% corpus-assisted multimodal CDA (Figure 1).

While studies which did not specify their frameworks were numerous (26%), Fairclough (2001a, b) stands out as the most employed framework and accounts for more than 31% of studies, not including instances in which it was used in parallel with other frameworks. In fact, several studies (18,3%) used a combination of several frameworks. For instance, (Lee, 2023) draws on (Fairclough, 2013) while (Benattabou, 2020) was enlightened by van Dijk (2001). Other CDS frameworks which were drawn upon in our database include feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) in five studies (Ji & Reiss, 2022; Košir & Lakshminarayanan, 2023; Kostas, 2021; Setyono, 2018; Stelzl et al., 2018), Foucauldian discourse analysis in three studies (Moore, 2020; Senior & LaMarre, 2024; Taira, 2019), van Dijk in two studies (Kurniawan et al., 2023; Purwanta, 2018) in addition to van Leeuwen (Said, 2023a), Wodak and Meyer (Hamdan Alghamdi, 2018), Machin and Mayr (Smith, 2023), and Kress and van Leeuwen (Puspitasari et al., 2021) with one study for each. (Figure 2)

4.4. Topics/issues

Several key issues have gathered scholarly attention (Figure 3). The two dominant categories were 'gender and sexuality' which accounts for more than 26% of the studies (16 out of 60) and 'Ethnicities/ Minorities/Race' with 15% of the investigations (9 out of 60). Classifying our studies according to issues and topics was arduous, however, due to fuzzy boundaries between some issues and also because many studies touched upon various issues simultaneously; for instances, Wangdu (2020) explores issues of

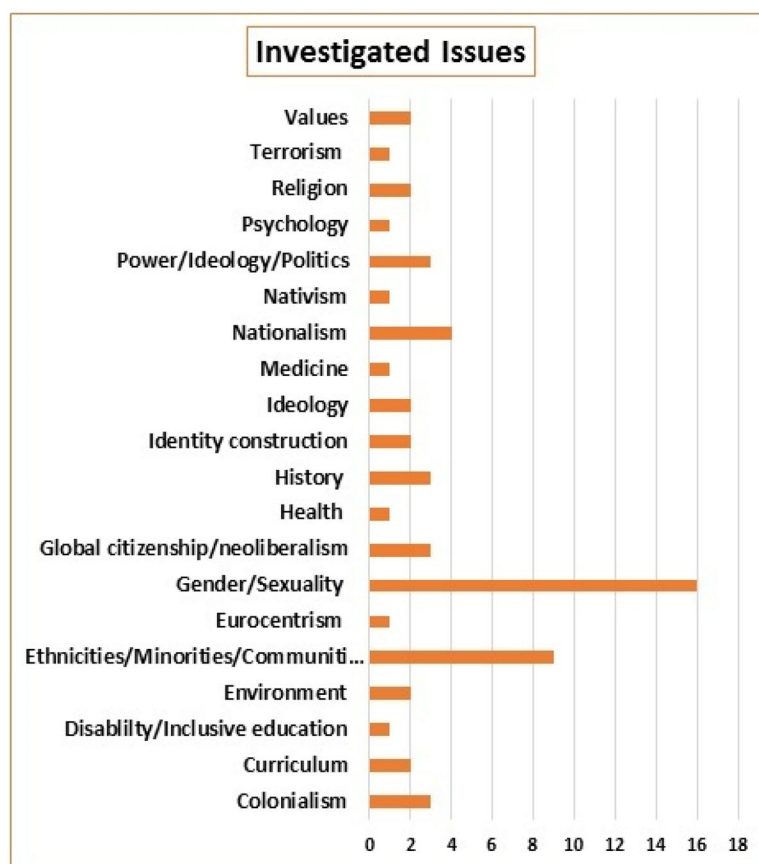


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of investigated issues.

history, national identity and refugees while Motschenbacher (2019) examines issues pertaining to special needs, nativism and identity construction. That is why we grouped some closely related issues into one category such as 'Ethnicities/Minorities/Race' 'Gender and Sexuality'. Here, we present a brief overview of all the studies covered in this review. It is important to note that the definitions and discussions of key terms, such as 'ideology' and 'nationalism', are based on the conceptualizations provided by the authors of the studies reviewed, and that we are simply reporting their interpretations at this stage.

4.4.1. Gender/sexuality

CDS Scholarship on gender representation in school textbooks exposes gender biases across diverse contexts. EFL textbooks in counties like Pakistan and Morocco continue to reinforce traditional patriarchal values while portraying women in subordinate and inferior social roles (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Benattabou, 2020). Even in countries with high ranks in gender equality indices such as the Philippines, Curaming and Curaming (2020) reveal a persistence of male dominance and ongoing existence of gender biases despite the evident pro-women perspectives of textbook designers. Diachronic CDS of textbooks such as Keles et al. (2023) indicates that while there are limited efforts by designers to tackle bias, gender representation has been maintained over five editions. Other studies that have incorporated visual analysis in their analysis such as Sulaimani and Elyas (2018) and Košir and Lakshminarayanan (2023) suggest that gender positioning in images reveal pronounced patriarchal discourse. Females are less represented both in quantity and quality. Triyono et al. (2021), Setyono (2018) and Dalimunthe et al. (2021) also investigate the multimodal representations of gender in diverse textbooks. Their findings indicate that although textbook designers maintain a balanced representation of male and female images throughout the material, gender stereotypes are still symbolically embedded in the textbook particularly when it comes to academic achievements, household roles and other subtle forms such as male firstness. This latter concept is also central to Pillay and Maistry (2018), who examine instances where males are mentioned before females in sentences and conversations and the usage of the generic term 'man'

throughout the texts, both of which suggest the superiority of the masculine. Kostas (2021) also investigates gender portrayal in primary education textbooks with an eye on how children interpret gender-normative discourses. His results indicate that, alongside androcentrism, textbooks are predominantly characterized by dominant masculinity discussions. They also indicate that boys show less readiness than girls to overthrow the outdated gender discourses that circulate in textbooks. Burden (2021) explores the uncharted territories concerning the gender representation of non-human characters in English language learning materials. His findings reveal a pronounced inclination toward depicting aggressive and adventurous male characters, the promotion of male supremacist ideologies, and the marginalization of female agency. Our review also shows that even in types of textbooks expected to be gender-neutral, gender biases are evident. Guichot-Reina and De La Torre-Sierra (2023) and Parise (2021), in their analysis of Mathematics textbooks, demonstrate that women are typically confined to domestic everyday tasks. Shifting the focus to sexuality education, Ji and Reiss (2022) investigate the challenge of engaging with learners as sexual subjects in China and observe that there is progress in addressing LGBT issues in sexuality education. Stelzl et al. (2018) also explore how the concept of 'sexual problems' is delineated and shaped in Canadian undergraduate context and indicates that the framing of sexuality knowledge reinforces conventional dominant discourses framed by the medical discourse of the American Psychiatric Association while alternative perspectives are marginalized.

4.4.2. Ethnicities/minorities/race

Turning our attention to issues of ethnicities, minorities and race, our review shows that the investigated textbooks often propagate ethnic and racial stereotypes rather than promote inclusivity. In Morocco, Said (2023a, 2023b) investigate the representation of Amazigh ethnic groups in EFL textbooks and shows that they are marked both linguistically and visually. They are depicted as an unnaturalized part of the Moroccan cultural identity. But as there is always ground for resistance and emancipatory discourse, Said et al. (2024), through positive discourse analysis (PDA), examine how an EFL textbook challenges these stereotypes through progressive discourse. Herath (2021), also examining EFL textbooks, exposes the marginalization and exclusion of minority groups in Sri Lanka, along with the suppression of their voices, histories, and cultures, thus accentuating inequality instead of bringing about change. Likewise, studies by Moore (2020) in Australia and Ho (2021) in Taiwan reveal how indigenous communities are portrayed as primitive and backward. In the Australian context for instance, the racial order is maintained despite the shift from a 'loud and proud' discourse of white exceptionalism and Aboriginal deficiency to 'polite' discourses about aboriginals. In Pakistan, textbooks, as noted by Lashari et al. (2023), focus intensely on Islam teachings. Consequently, minority faith students see language learning environment as dominated by ideology with a neglect of diversity. In a similar investigation, Uzum et al. (2021) show how foreign language textbooks used in a U.S. university fail to capture the complex identities of language users and learners and the diversity of their cultures rendering them apolitical and uncritical. Likewise, Padilla and Vana (2024) reveal a noticeable suppression of Afro-Latinxs in Spanish textbooks used in USA. Their multimodal analysis identifies stereotypical representation in form of collectivization, racial stereotypes and colorism among others.

4.4.3. Neoliberalism/global citizenship

Loyal to CDS tradition of tracing neoliberal discourse in educational materials, several studies shed light on how neoliberal ideology permeates school textbooks. Nizamani and Shah (2024) observe that EFL textbooks in Pakistan submerge students with neoliberal themes such as consumerism, marketization, branding among others and prepare them for a competitive world rather than one grounded in mutual progress, cooperation and happiness. Similarly, Choi and Kim (2020) reveal a dominant presence of a neoliberal agenda and nationalist rhetoric in the discussions on global citizenship within Korean official social studies textbooks. Through themes such as globalization, sustainability, cultural diversity and peace, the textbooks spread neoliberal economic values while sidelining multiculturalism and social justice. In a similar study, Babaii and Sheikhi (2018) conclude that Iranian EFL textbooks advertise and legitimize neoliberal, market-led lifestyle. Smith (2023) sheds light on dominant narratives and power relations in textbooks revealing a Western-centric bias which marginalizes cultural diversity. Xu (2021) compares two editions of the same Chinese history textbook under two different publication systems to

illustrate how it mirrors the ideology and authority of the then-current leaders in China. The conclusion emphasizes that the information presented in Chinese history textbooks aligns with the political requirements of the Communist Party of China. In a similar study, Hallett (2021) explores how a series of locally produced Lithuanian EFL textbooks used during and post-Soviet era downgrade anglophone countries while promoting Soviet communist ideology. Liu et al. (2024) apply a combination of corpus linguistics and CDA to uncover the ideological underpinnings of ELT in China. Their results indicate that these textbooks avoid topics related to political philosophy. While concepts such as 'Government', 'Politics', and 'Warfare' are underused, there is an overuse of semantic domains such as 'Education' and 'Science and technology'.

4.4.4. History/colonialism

History is another critical issue that has attracted the attention of researchers who investigate how the enduring legacies of colonialism and historical events shape educational narratives. Gu (2022) compares discourses of 'Nanjing Massacre' in history textbooks of Japan and Mainland China and uncovers that China uses it to consolidate its patriotic education and national solidarity while Japan marginalizes it and constructs an uncritical voice for its army. Similarly, Kurniawan et al. (2023) shed lights on the discourse practices in the narrative of the Chinese Rebellion in the Indonesian history textbooks and how it leads to the marginalization of the Chinese role in Indonesian history. Pavlick (2019) suggests that US history textbooks construct freedom as both an idealized American value and a mean to pacify the violent ruptures of US history even though the concept's meaning is not fully explained. Purwanta (2018) attempts to explain how and why the discourse of colonization persists in post-colonial Indonesian history textbooks and describes how these propagate colonial narratives by idealizing Western values while denigrating Indonesian agency. Curiel and Durán (2021) analyze early 20th-century bilingual Spanish-English textbooks published in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines to reveal how the coloniality knowledge embedded in these textbooks present both content and structural obstacles to learning opportunities. Kim and Lee (2023) explore how colonial Japan has used language education to legitimize Japanese colonial surveillance practices over Korea and demonstrate that textbooks promote Japanese authority, thereby encouraging Korean students to embrace Japanese ideologies.

4.4.5. Nationalism

Moving to the topic of nationalism, several studies explore how textbooks play an important role in instilling national identity in learners. Iamsa-ard et al. (2024) investigate how the use of a Chinese historical novel as a Thai textbook serves as a medium via which monarchy ideology is inculcated to Thai students, thus contributing to the revival of royal-nationalist ideology in Thailand. Wangdu (2020) explores the influence of history teaching in the construction of national identity in the context of Tibetan refugee schools located in India and reveals a prevalent political and cultural agenda embedded within the textbooks. Shinabe (2018), in a comparative analysis, identifies ethnocentric trends in Japanese and Spanish social science textbooks, where Europe is idealized while Asia is negatively portrayed. In South Korea, Kim and Lee (2023) examine how EFL textbooks offer opportunities for learners to position themselves as proud Koreans as well as legitimate users of English language, thus merging national identity formation with global engagement.

4.4.6. Identity construction

The reviewed CDS scholarship has also focused on how educational textbooks contribute to the construction of identity. Taira (2019) analyzes 'nihonjinron' discourse, a form of Japanization implemented through education in an Okinawan textbook and shows how Okinawan students are subtly assimilated into Japanese identity. Alzubi et al (2023) and Hamdan Alghamdi (2018) both suggest that Saudi EFL textbooks fail to align with the students' cultural background as they underrepresent the local culture and exclude its components which are essential to fostering awareness of national identity, thus compromising students' ability to effectively enhance their communicative skills in a context marked by wide international interactions. Bustang (2023) investigates how problems that are found in probability tasks in mathematics textbook position students and the possible consequences this position might

have on them. The article argues that the textbook authors adopt an authoritative attitude which restricts students' autonomy in problem-solving.

4.4.7. Other topics

Several studies explore a variety of other themes in textbooks, ranging from religion and environmental issues to values, health, terrorism and more. Starting with religion, Blinkova and Vermeer (2019) examine how an Orthodoxy religion textbook in Russia indoctrinates students by enhancing patriotism and turning Russian religious education into citizenship education. Similarly, Kourgiotis (2023) sheds light on how textbooks in Syria depict Christian–Muslim relations to promote national unity while concealing Christian marginalization in form of the 'quid pro quo' relationship of protection as a prize for loyalty to Bashar al-Asad's regime. Environmental issues have also had their share of attention in the literature with D'Souza et al. (2020) and Lee (2023) trying to expose the anthropocentric and corporate-friendly discourses which deflect responsibility for environmental crisis in Indian and Chinese textbooks. Puspitasari et al. (2021) and Setyono and Widodo (2019) focus their attention on values in Indonesian EFL textbooks. While both studies find that textbooks are increasingly integrating moral values, the latter suggests that cultural materials from certain parts of the world, such as African and Asian countries, remain underrepresented. Ford (2019) analyses terrorism in British textbooks suggesting that they promotes state-endorsed views including state violence while neglecting the voices of both the 'terrorists' and the civilians residing in regions targeted by British foreign policy. Other studies shed light on how textbooks perpetuate cultural hierarchies and reinforce dominant perspectives. Motschenbacher (2019), for instance, investigates the portrayal of non-native and native English language users in a German special needs EFL textbook series and reveals limited inclusivity of non-native English users and a dominance of Anglophone cultures. Chacón-Díaz (2022) investigates Eurocentrism in science and math textbooks and finds that they focus on Eurocentric perspectives while neglecting contributions from non-Western scientists. Padilla and Vana (2019) investigate language ideologies in Spanish textbooks in USA and finds that in addition to privileging the type of Spanish spoken in Spain, they promote stereotypical suggestions that contribute to overgeneralization of Spanish culture and identity. In the field of Psychology, Senior and LaMarre (2024) draw on Foucauldian discourse analysis to discuss schizophrenia in New Zealand and Australian psychology textbooks finding that people that are diagnosed with schizophrenia are positioned as subject in need of 'necessary' biomedical intervention while their voices are suppressed from the texts. This pattern is also echoed in studies dealing with health and medicine issues. Westbrook and Harvey (2023) analyze how US social and behavioral science textbooks frame the relationship among society, behavior, and health and call for strengthening counter discourses which emphasize the influence of both social and individual factors in health behavior. Closely related to this issue, Bertotti and Miner (2019) focus on medicine in gynecology textbooks and examine how pro-pharma discourse normalizes contraceptives in the medical practice without discussing their risks. Shume (2023), in his investigation of how disability is conceptualized in a science teacher education textbook, also uncovers a hegemonic medicalized view that depicts disability as an individual deficit and calls for emancipatory social alternative discourses to the medical model.

5. Discussion

As can be seen from the above findings, there is a global interest and engagement with the analysis of school textbooks through the lens of critical discourse studies. Our database features studies from all over the world despite regional disparities. North America and Southeast Asia have the highest research output in this area, followed closely by Eastern and South Asia. USA ranking number one in CDS of textbooks - only closely matched by Indonesia- is no surprise given its status as the foremost nation in CDS productivity worldwide (Ahmed et al., 2024). Other notable major contributions from different backgrounds including China, Morocco, KSA and Pakistan further highlight the global reach and interdisciplinary nature of research on textbooks and critical discourse studies.

Regarding the types of textbooks that have received the most scrutiny from researchers, EFL textbooks emerged as the most studied category, with a share of more than a third of the studies, matching the findings of Smith and Sheyholislami (2022). Widely available and used across various educational

settings throughout the globe thanks to the prominence of English language education, EFL are easily accessible for data collection and analysis. As a result, there is a growing interest in understanding the way ELT materials construct and reinforce various discourses, including those related to gender, minorities, neoliberalism, identity and more. Ranking second, history textbooks have also attracted scholarly attention. Several studies have emphasized the significance of historical narratives in shaping collective understandings of national identity, race, politics, colonialism, and religion. CDS proved useful in revealing how history textbooks construct, contest, and reproduce, historical narratives while shedding light on power dynamics and ideological agendas. The review also features a diverse range of other subjects that have been examined. These include social sciences, mathematics, languages, sexuality education, and Spanish as a Second Language (SL), among others. Each of these subjects offers unique insights into how disciplinary knowledge is framed and disseminated through textbooks and its implications on identity formation, socialization, and knowledge production.

Concerning the used CDS approaches and frameworks, most studies (83%) employ traditional (linguistic) CDA as their analytical approach. Even though there is an emergence of multimodal CDA, which is used in 11% of the studies, most work remains monomodal. The use of other CDS approaches, such as Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), Corpus-assisted CDA, and Corpus-assisted multimodal CDA is weak, even though each of these approaches offer unique methodological insights and analytical tools for examining discourse. As for the used frameworks, the prominence of Fairclough's framework highlights its continuing influence and utility to CDS, with its emphasis on the interplay between discourse, ideology, and social change (Fairclough, 2009). Besides, a significant proportion of studies (18.3%) draw on a combination of frameworks, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of CDS and the recognition that different theoretical perspectives, a form of triangulation (Baker, 2013), offer complementary insights into discourse analysis and allows researchers to tailor their analyses to the specific features of their data and research questions. Other CDS frameworks that were drawn on are Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA), Foucauldian discourse analysis, and frameworks proposed by scholars such as van Dijk, Van Leeuwen, Wodak and Meyer, Machin and Mayr and Kress and Van Leeuwen. The diversity of frameworks employed reflects the richness and complexity of critical discourse studies as an approach to social analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

As for the issues that were investigated, a strong thread running through most studies is the pervasive patterns of bias, marginalization, and ideological influence embedded within educational materials. Thus, a recurring theme across the reviewed studies is the examination of power dynamics and (mis)-representation. The reviewed articles from our database exposed issues of marginalization of minority groups and indigenous cultures including those pertaining to colonial legacies which continue to shape educational narratives. Studies also investigated the instrumental role of textbooks in shaping national identity, historical narratives, and religious ideologies, reflecting the socio-political contexts of their respective countries. Whether promoting royal-nationalist ideology in Thailand (Iamsa-ard et al., 2024), constructing national identity in Tibetan refugee schools (Wangdu, 2020), or serving political indoctrination in Russian Orthodoxy textbooks (Blinkova & Vermeer, 2019), textbooks play a central role in shaping collective memory and national consciousness. The reviewed articles demonstrate that some textbooks promote Neoliberal economics (EFL) and Eurocentric representations (Science and Mathematics) while others endorse broader societal narratives and power structures (Health, Psychology) at the expense of social justice and multiculturalism.

While this review provides valuable insights, it is essential to acknowledge its limitations, some of which stem from the inherent nature of CDS, while others arise from the scope of our data. Regarding the latter, since I have primarily covered a limited proportion of English-language articles, my analysis may be limited by the linguistic and cultural contexts they represent, potentially excluding perspectives from other languages or regions. As for the former, critical discourse analysis is discourse analysis with attitude (Dijk, 2013). Since it often takes explicit position and aligns with marginalized or oppressed groups, there is a risk that the researcher's perspective becomes influenced by this alignment. The nature of textbooks as hybrid texts, which contain various sub-discourses that interact through tension (Bock, 2018), means that the analysis may focus on particular discourses at the expense of others, leading to an overemphasis of certain ideological constructs, such as issues of power and marginalization, while potentially overlooking others. Widdowson (2004, p. 109) cautions that CDA sometimes provides

'interpretations which claim, implicitly or explicitly, to be based on a close analysis of textual features but which are actually pretextually motivated'. Hence, the findings of this review should be interpreted in the light of these limitations.

In accordance with our findings and the outlined limitations, we suggest that future CDS research of school textbooks focus on the 'dusty corners', that is 'the neglected aspects of analysis and under-researched topics or text types' (Taylor & Marchi, 2018, p. 9). Research should expand its focus beyond gender, ethnicity and other well-researched topics to include understudied and emerging global issues that shape the worldviews of learners. Equally important, examining the underexplored types of textbooks such as vocational education manuals, arts, philosophy among others can help wipe the dust and bring new issues and perspectives to the fore. Methodologically, our findings reveal that we are still far from a methodological pluralism of CDS investigations of textbook. Traditional (linguistic) CDS accounts for more than four-fifths of the used analytical approaches. There is a need, therefore, for integrating underutilized approaches or triangulating different methods, approaches, frameworks and data (visual, linguistic, acoustic etc.) to get deeper insights into how textbooks as a genre naturalize ideological constructions and perpetuate inequality.

6. Conclusion

Overall, this systematic review article offers a survey of the most up-to-date studies that make use of CDS to analyze school textbooks. It attempts to contribute to our understanding of the ways CDS of school textbooks enlightens curriculum development and education policy. It allows us to demonstrate the importance of critically examining educational materials and challenging dominant discourses that perpetuate inequalities so as to promote a more equitable and socially just education system. It also suggests avenues for future inquiry by identifying understudied topics/textbooks, underused approaches/frameworks to expand the scope of CDS of school textbooks.

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